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PHIL 502.02: Poststructuralism

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POSTSTRUCTURALISM
PHIL 502, SECTION 02 (33657)
LIBERAL ARTS BUILDING, ROOM 146
T 5:10-8:00 PM
SPRING SEMESTER 2002

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Office Hrs: T:12:30-1:30; R 2-3:30 & by appt.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

"Poststructuralist" is a term that has been applied to a group of philosophers with varied (and often conflicting) commitments. From Derrida's neo-Heideggerian problematic, which sees us as aporetically circling about in "the house of language" (but without Heidegger's hope for an authenticating self-presence) to Deleuze's neo-Nietzschean celebration of the body, however, what these philosophers seem to share is a rejection of "the subject." For the poststructuralists, this notion is seen as nothing less than the residue of the metaphysical tradition, a pernicious illusion that is better jettisoned in its entirety.

Earlier poststructuralist works generally made no attempt to carve out an ethics, which, for the most part, was viewed as no less pernicious. For some philosophers, this corroborated their belief that the poststructuralists were radicals who had no place within the philosophical tradition. To my mind, however, poststructuralism (as others have argued) actually operates squarely within the philosophical tradition, and, practically speaking, arguably has a conservative bent (i.e., it may tend to be quietistic in nature). In any event, since the 1980's, the poststructuralists have attempted to carve out an ethics. The question that motivates this course is whether, in the light of their earlier commitments, they have the theoretical resources to make good this project.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, Routledge, 1994
J-F Lyotard and J-L Thebaud, *Just Gaming*, University of Minnesota Press, 1999
Giles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Columbia University press, 1983
Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* (volume 1), Random House/Vintage, 1990

Articles and excerpts from books by Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault will be on reserve in the Boyce Library.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION:

Your evaluation for the course will be based upon two papers, an oral presentation, and general class participation. The first paper, which should be between 3000 and 3500 words, and will be worth 30% of your grade, will be on Derrida. The second paper, which should be between 4500 and 5000 words, and will be worth 50% of your grade, will cover at least two of the subsequent three philosophers that we shall deal with (Lyotard, Deleuze, Foucault), and consider the relative merits of their ethical positions. Your oral presentation will be worth 20% of your grade. And, based upon your attendance and class participation, I reserve the right to adjust your grade by one increment.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

WEEK:	READINGS:
Jan 29	Introductory lecture: "The Ends of Man": From Nietzsche and Heidegger to Poststructuralism
Feb 5	Derrida, "Difference" (on reserve)
Feb 12	Derrida, "Force of Law" (on reserve)
Feb 19	Derrida, <i>Specters of Marx</i> , chs. 1-3
Feb 26	Derrida, <i>Specters of Marx</i> , chs. 4-5
Mar 5	Lyotard, "Adorno as the Devil" (on reserve) and <i>Just Gaming</i> (Days 1 and 2)
Mar 12	Lyotard, <i>Just Gaming</i> (Days 3 through 7)
Mar 19	SPRING BREAK
Mar 26	Deleuze, <i>Nietzsche and Philosophy</i> , chs. 1-3
Apr 2	Deleuze, <i>Nietzsche and Philosophy</i> , chs. 4-5
Apr 9	Foucault, from <i>Order of Things</i> , Preface, chs. 7 & 9
Apr 16	Foucault, from <i>Discipline and Punish</i> , Part 3, chs. 2-3
Apr 23	Foucault, <i>History of Sexuality</i> , Parts 1-3
Apr 30	Foucault, <i>History of Sexuality</i> , Parts 4-5
May 7	Foucault, from <i>Use of Pleasure</i> (on reserve)